

St. Lawrence Seaway Authority Act

\$329 million, for which the taxpayers will have to put up the money at any rate to start construction. Therefore that means inspection. I find, according to the answers given by the minister yesterday to a series of questions I placed on the order paper, that an inspection section was established on December 1, 1955. A chief inspector, Mr. J. Buchanan Stirling, was appointed in December 1955. Over a period of time he had a staff of 20, and according to the answer they had the responsibility of inspection on behalf of the St. Lawrence seaway authority. That work has not been completed. As a matter of fact, it has not only been going on over this past year, but if my memory serves me correctly there is to be somewhere in the neighbourhood of \$50 million worth of construction done in 1959. That is a very large capital expenditure. Yet we find that the St. Lawrence seaway authority inspection branch was let go in 1958. We find that the chief inspector did not resign but was laid off in November 1958.

Yet with all the work which has to be carried on this year, amounting to some \$50 million, with the exception of three people the entire staff has been disbanded, and of the three that are left, only one I understand is an engineer; the other two are instrument men. Before becoming an elected member of parliament I spent all my life in the construction industry and I can tell the committee that it is a most unusual procedure to lay off the chief inspector and the majority of the men during the course of construction, keeping only three who had been employed rather late, and then providing for inspection on a contract basis with an inspection firm. I want to repeat that this is a most unusual procedure which has been followed, and I think the minister should explain why this was done. A statement by him would be the only way to quiet some of the rumours which have appeared in various places with regard to inspection and the type of construction undertaken.

I should like, also, to deal with some of the answers which have been given to questions put to the minister, and request the minister to let us have more detailed information. On February 2, for example, I asked the Minister of Transport some questions about certain matters affecting the Cornwall island south channel high level bridge, and in his reply the minister stated that \$1,601,100 had not yet been paid to the contractor. I think the minister might now inform the house why that money is being withheld, in order that a decision may be reached as to whether the engineer or the contractor concerned can be held responsible for the remedial measures which had to be

taken to repair the main pier at an estimated cost of \$262,000, the cable-bent pier 13 at a cost of \$2,000 and the north abutment at a cost of \$10,000. When the minister comments on this I should also like to know whether it is usual for a bridge the size of the Cornwall island bridge to be founded on dense glacial till and not on bedrock. I am very interested in this in view of the remarks made by the hon. member for Laurier when he was telling us about the necessity of finding bedrock, even if it meant going down five or six feet. But here we have an answer by the minister to the effect that it has been necessary to spend \$274,000 on remedial repairs, and that the structure was not driven down to bedrock but was founded on dense glacial till. While he is dealing with this question perhaps the minister would also tell us whether there was not another bridge in this immediate area which was built on dense glacial till and which collapsed.

I think these are the sort of questions which should be answered before we can vote on this motion. I note that the Minister of Transport said yesterday that an additional \$11 million was required as the further cost of converting the Mercier bridge into a high level bridge. This is another matter which interests me, and I hope the minister will not mind enlarging on the necessity for spending this additional \$11 million. I hope the minister will tell the committee the name of the company responsible for designing this changed bridge, and its engineering qualifications. I should like to know, also, whether this same company has been given the job of inspecting its own bridge. I was asked personally to direct these questions to the minister, and I am doing so at this time.

As I said, I began by trying to deal with the statement made yesterday by the Minister of Transport and to raise, I hope in a constructive way, some of the questions which should be answered in order that there might be a clear picture before the members of this committee both with regard to why there should be this great increase in cost compared to the original estimate and also why the need for spending this extra money has arisen, whether something has gone wrong with the engineering plans or for any other reason. In particular, with so many millions being spent at the present time, why was the inspection branch fired in 1958? The question I am raising is this: is it good construction policy to fire your own inspection branch and use the services of an inspection company, the same company which had to report to the chief inspector of the seaway authority when the authority had its own inspection branch. There may be reasonable and logical answers to these queries. I am